

Glencoe Heritage Trust Newsletter No. 1 Spring 2017



Glencoe Heritage Trust News



As we enter 2017, a reminder of what the Glencoe Heritage Trust (GHT) has been involved with in 2016.

The year began with the annual commemoration of the Massacre of Glencoe, 13th February 1692, when around 50 souls braved the weather to remember all those who died on that fateful day. A Requiem took place at St Mary's Church Glencoe, followed by the annual march from Bridge of Coe to the Memorial Cross, where a short service of prayers, conducted by Canon McKenzie, the laying of wreaths and a lament on the bagpipes, concluded the proceedings. **(Photo above).**

Many will be familiar with the spectacular 'drone' videos and photographs of Glencoe which are regularly posted by the Heritage Trust on our Facebook page, helping to keep the spectacular scenery, history & culture alive. Look at [GLENCOE HERITAGE TRUST SCOTLAND](#) on Facebook and "like" our page.

During last winter's severe storm, the footpath to the Pap of Glencoe was washed away, which made it difficult for the dozens of hill walkers who love to walk and climb here. We contacted Scottish Water (SW) who has water tanks on our land, and they kindly offered to contract a local firm to reinstate the path,

with some remedial work also taking place. The trust is most appreciative for Scottish Water's co-operation.

The Massacre Memorial Cross had required work to be undertaken, as the landscape had become overgrown with overhanging trees and scrub over the years; we contacted the Clan Donald Foundation USA, via John F McDonald, who, after consultation with executive members, agreed to forward \$1,000 US for this worthy cause. We were able to enlist the services of D & P Scott, who carried out extensive work on the landscape, and K MacDonald for repainting the MacDonald crest. Many hours were spent altogether on the worthwhile project, and we are most grateful to the CD Foundation, for their help. The Memorial Cross attracts hundreds of overseas visitors every year.

Legend has it that many of the ancient beech trees, planted by Glencoe McDonalds after the Napoleonic Wars, to honour their McDonald comrades, who died, have now reached the end of their life, and have succumbed to our wet & windy weather. A firm who specialize in tree felling cut some of the dangerous trees. The wood was chopped by local volunteers and sold locally to pay for the tree felling. This can cost in the region of four figures.

Ancestry:

Clansmen & women from overseas visit the Trust's office to learn of their ancestry; There have been Rankins, Hendersons, MacIntyres, Moores, and MacDonalds, whom we have been able to help, either by documentation or information on websites.

Mr Charles McDonald, (Chas) an organiser of Clan visits and events, who hails from Arisaig, organised a visit to Eilean Munde, the Burial Isle, with Mark McDonald and his son Mark, who hail from Texas,



**Chas MacDonald with Mark jnr and Mark snr
MacDonald**

to visit the McDonald Chiefs' graves. Chas invited Ros along to point out the relevant gravestones. Mark Snr, is the Clan Donald genealogist USA.

Mr & Mrs Vic Henderson, NSW, Australia, called at the GHT office to enquire of their Glencoe ancestry. With the information they had, we were able to show them the exact location in Glencoe where their ancestors lived, and add some names to their family tree. The Hendersons were thrilled, after travelling such a long distance to be in Glencoe.



A group from The Clan Donald Highlands & Islands, who were visiting Glencoe, called at the GHT office, we explained our work in maintaining The Massacre Cross, Eilean Munde (Burial Isle), and showed a video of the River Coe, the Glencoe woodlands and our archive pictures. Lois MacDonell of Glengarry thanked us for an insight on our trust activities.

**Above and Right:
The Chapel before
the tidy up, covered
in growth. After, the
stonework is visible
again.**

**Opposite Page:
Graves before, and
stones visible again
after the tidy up.**



Norman MacInnis, past president of Clan MacInnes USA, contacted the GHT to offer \$1,000 US for the upkeep and maintenance of Eilean Munde (Burial Isle). This offer came out of the blue, however, it coincided with a Clan MacInnes visit to the island. Mr Robert Watt, Ballachulish, gave his time to transport the



MacInnes's by boat to the island, relaying the history of the area as they sailed. Our thanks go to Robert & his son Peter for their invaluable help, and also the generous offer from Clan MacInnes.

Following on from the Island visit, we contacted Gardening Services, and a huge amount of scrub clearing took place on the Island; the ancient ruins of the chapel, c 14th century were cleared, and the remaining stone work exposed, as well as gravestones of the many Clans people buried there.

We received a telephone call one Sunday, asking if the GHT might be available to show the Massacre Cross and the history surrounding it, to a party of



**The ex-Dutch Marines at
the Massacre Memorial**

Ex-Dutch Marines, who had trained in the Glencoe mountains in the 1970s. Ros was called upon to undertake this request. The following day, a large group of very fit looking men arrived at our office. It was a case of follow the leader through the village. Pictures were taken and stories exchanged, with the promise of a return visit.

The Glencoe Heritage Trust borrowed the initial sum of £108,000 to buy the land. This has now reduced to £19,500 thanks to the fundraising efforts from the Glencoe Heritage Trust, local and overseas acquaintances. The urgency is to repay the unsecured loans as quickly as possible in order that the lands remain as they are and not put up for sale again. The Trust's work continues but it does need more volunteers and financial assistance to re-pay the amount outstanding and for funding ongoing and future projects. For more detailed information on the work of the Glencoe Heritage Trust, contact the Secretary or visit the website www.glencoe-heritage-trust.com

Donations can be made by PayPal through the website or to:
The Secretary, Glencoe Heritage Trust, 24a Carnoch, Glencoe, Argyll, PH49 4HQ Tel: +44 (0)1855811 490 e-mail: glencoe-heritage@talk21.com

Eilean Munde

Reprinted From “Macinnes Archer” Winter 2016-17 Edition

Near the shores of Loch Leven, close to the road towards Glencoe, rises a small island out of the cold tidal waters. This is Eilean Munde, the Isle of the Dead. Eilean Munde is the site of a chapel built by St. Fintan Munda who settled here from Iona for a period of time in the 7th century. The church on the island was burnt in 1495, rebuilt in the 16th century, and held its last service in July 1653. The island is the site of a graveyard once used by the Stewarts of Ballachulish, the MacDonalDs of Glencoe and the Camerons of Callart. These clans shared the island and the maintenance of the graveyard, even when there was conflict between them. Old enemies united in death. No bridge or ferry connects the island full of graves with the world of the living. You need a boat, your own or a chartered one to access it.

It is said that there were three landing places on the island called “ports of the dead”. Each clan had a recognized port or landing area. If for some reason, a clan couldn’t use its own port, the boat would return to the mainland and try again.

With awe and reverence we disembark our small boat to wander about this eerie island. With each step you feel a gravestone beneath your feet, buried by overgrown grass. We are looking for a physical connection, a headstone that bears the name MacInnes. All the while we feel the spiritual connection as we step cautiously onto the soft earth and trip on a sunken headstone. Could one fall into an old grave? A horrible thought you somehow can’t get rid of.

Most headstones come from the nearby Ballachulish quarry, slate with ornate writing. A rather unusual material for highland burial grounds, but very beautiful set against the summer grass.

Two smaller islands sit next to Eilean Munde. Eilean a’ Chomhraidh, the Isle of Discussion, is a meeting place to discuss disputes on questions of land ownership and other matters. After a dispute had been settled, the parties sailed to Eilean na Baine, the Isle of Covenant or Ratification, where agreements were drawn up and sealed.

River Coe

David Gunn



The River Coe is fine little salmon river with its source high in the tallest mountains of Argyll. Starting as a trickle high up the slopes of Stob nan Cabar and the Lairig Eilde down past the meeting of three waters and Coire Gabhail, with snow melt from Coire nan Lochan, it flows into Loch Achtriochtan. This is where migrating Salmon spawn and from where the starving brown trout leave in summer to go downstream to Loch Leven to return later as silver sea trout.

The Heritage trust has the most prolific section of the river for fishing with eight named pools. Starting at the river mouth extending for 1 mile on the South bank and 1.5 miles on the North this includes “Kilday Falls” and the sea pool at the bottom, to “The Dyke” at the top. Sea Otters come into the bottom pool, red and roe deer cross into the lower village and now even a Sea Eagle makes a visit on occasion.

Beyond this, various folks own short bits of the river and fishing rights, with the biggest section belonging to the National Trust. The Heritage trust lets out the



**Opposite page:
The Kilday Falls**

Left: The Sea Pool

**Below: Bridge of
Coe**

**Pictures by David
Gunn**

right to fish to the Glencoe Angling Club, which has fifteen members. Every club angler is now conservation minded and release all salmon alive back to the water by fishing mostly fly only following strict catch and release guidelines. The River Coe used to be heavily poached and this is still a problem although less so than in the past. Having folk fishing and walking the river acts as a deterrent to poachers. The club keeps a watchful eye on all of the river just to make sure the fish make it to the spawning grounds at the Loch. I think this is a good example of angling supporting conservation as without anglers poachers would wipe the salmon out.

I act as bailiff on behalf of the Heritage Trust and the other river proprietors. I also repre-



sent the heritage trust to the local district salmon fisheries board and caretake the river for the Heritage Trust. I enjoy keeping an eye on the river and all the nature that surrounds it, while working with the angling club and others. I see it as a chance to repay the bounty of the past by trying and ensure for the heritage trust that the community and visitors of the future can still see the silver leaper *Salmo salar* make its way home.

Having fished the River Coe since a wee boy and enjoyed many a fish from its clear fast waters it's a privilege to look after the river for the heritage trust. As migrating fish stocks are in decline it's a challenge faced by all the small west coast rivers. Salmon face many challenges from birth to the end of their natural cycle. The small fish must survive many more cormorants, heron and goosanders than in the past. They exit the river into an enclosed sea loch with a large salmon farm, facing possible infestation and death from the parasitic sea lice. Then once in open sea their journey to feeding grounds off the Arctic ice is now hundreds of miles longer due to receding sea ice and so many don't make it there and starve. If they make it they must stay longer to put on weight and be strong enough to make the longer journey back, running the gauntlet of seals and illegal netting at sea before coming once more to their native river and the fearsome upriver journey to start the cycle again. Thankfully genetic dilution from escaped farm salmon is low as they lack the strength to negotiate Kilday Falls and the resilience and strength of the Coe salmon is legendary as the Coe in full flow is a formidable river.

When you look over the side of the village bridge and see the salmon under the rock, spare a thought for the four to seven years it's taken from hatching to making the 4,000 mile return trip home and the fast, turbulent water and many waterfalls it's got to leap over before laying its eggs once more at Loch Achtriochtan and beginning the cycle again. Not for nothing was *bradan feasa* (the salmon of knowledge) part of Celtic mythology and keeper of wisdom.

Old Postcards of Glencoe

Elaine MacDonald-Coulter



It is now over 25 yrs since I started collecting old postcards of the Glencoe and surrounding areas. It began whilst I was working in Dundee, when I came upon an Antique Collectors Fair one Sunday afternoon. As I was passing the Collectors Postcard Stand, one postcard caught my eye – it was a very old postcard of Glencoe Village. I decided to look for more and was pleased to discover many more. I have been collecting ever since, and many of the postcards were displayed at a Photographic Exhibition held by the Glencoe Heritage Trust a few years ago.

The old photographs immediately catch your attention, houses and buildings which perhaps no longer exist, areas of land that had no houses but now have lots, old fashioned cars, lorries, dress styles – there is a lot of history that we can learn from those invaluable photographs.

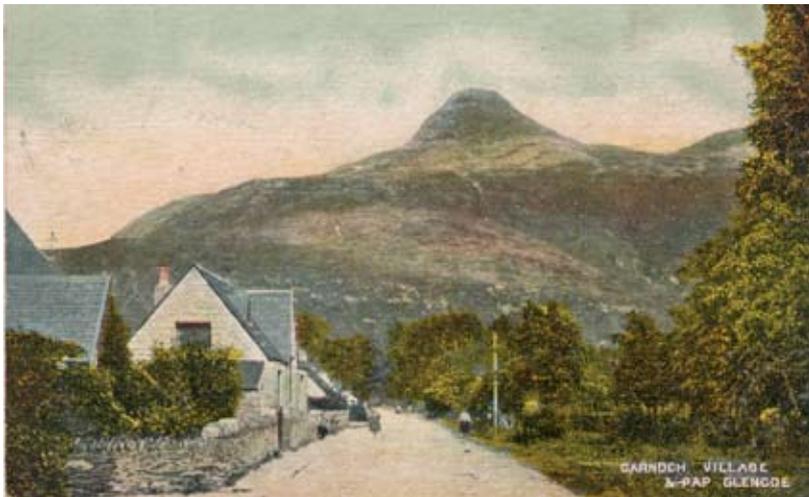
It is also just as interesting to read the messages on the backs of the postcards – the weather seems to have always been the main topic, also the stunning scenery, in particular Queen Victoria's view point from the top of the gorge look-



ing down the Glen. The warm hospitality also gets mentioned as does the activities undertaken such as walking and cycling. The addresses on the postcards are also an indication that years ago people did travel the length of the UK to take a holiday.

100 years on and technology has moved on, however the comments are just the same except instead of sending the traditional postcards, we have internet and the opportunity for instantly sending an e-postcard on social media anywhere in the world. The famous view points such as the Gorge, the Three Sisters etc are all well known views but in modern times we can also take “Selfies” against those famous backdrops.

Whilst the world is always changing it is to be hoped that the appreciation of the natural scenery, wildlife, history and the balance of tourism will continue throughout the Glen.



Glencoe

Glencoe is known by millions of people around the world for its unique beauty as well as for the history of the massacre in 1692. The name Glencoe evokes many emotions and descriptions. Some people see it as glorious, magnificent, stunning, sad and mysterious, and often this depends on the weather. Some people only see a view and not what makes up the ecosystem of that view.

Salmon, otters, frogs, badgers, deer, fox, pine marten, eagles, and other birds can be seen. Plants can be seen like ash, birch, alder, rowan trees, brambles, fungi - wild mushrooms, primrose, holly, wild orchids and much more.

There are many resources online, in book shops and in libraries for finding out more about the flora and fauna of Glencoe. Take time to enjoy what is around you in Glencoe and you will see its beauty in a different way.

Washing Day in Glencoe Before Electricity

George Grant

In days gone by every household in Glencoe had an outbuilding with a wood burning boiler. The young women of the village would cross the crofts to the hill known as the 'Meul' to gather dry firewood, which they would tie in a bundle.

The women all wore aprons, which they would remove and fill with moss, roll it into a cylinder shape and fix it on their backs. They would then use it to support the firewood by resting it on the moss to carry home and use to fuel the wash boiler.

The women would pick a dry spring day to remove all blankets from the beds in their houses, putting them in a wooden wash tub which was round with handles on either side. They filled the tub with soapy water, heated by the fire, then tramped on the blankets with their bare feet inside the tub, this was called 'tramping' the blankets.

Afterwards the women would rinse the blankets in cold water, then tie each one in turn to one handle of the tub, and a walking stick at the other end, and roll the stick until as much water was squeezed out before hanging them on to the washing line to dry.

Carnach Wood SSSI

John Roy

Many people will be unaware that Glencoe boasts a Site of Special Scientific Interest on the Carnach Crofts common grazing hill, the hill on the other side of the A82 from the village. The underlying geology of the hill, together with the high rainfall and steep north facing slope all combine to create an unusual situation.



The main rock formation of the hill is Ballachulish limestone, a less pure form of slate. Limestones are sedimentary rocks made from sea deposits millions of years ago. Ballachulish limestone has been heated and pressurised by volcanic activity making it harder and less soluble. All the same, our high rainfall leaches minerals from the rock, ensuring that the



Above: Greater Butterfly Orchid

Right: Northern Marsh Orchid



soil derived is of a higher pH (less acidic) than other soils in the area. Its northerly aspect means it gets little sun, so never really dries out.

The hillside has become colonised by ash and alder trees. The understorey has a rich diversity of plants, including common spotted and greater butterfly orchids and Grass of Parnassus. Unusual ferns such as Wilson’s Filmy Fern can be found on outcrops.

Scottish Natural Heritage has suggested that using the hill for summer grazing is beneficial to the ecosystem by keeping areas open. Non-native trees such as beech and sycamore should be removed as

they have a habit of seeding themselves around.

Carnach Wood is the best example of this rare type of woodland in the Highlands. It is an example of how man can co-exist with nature to a mutually beneficial effect.



Above: Common Spotted Orchid

Right: Wilson’s Filmy Fern

Pictures by John Roy



Scotch Argus butterflies feeding on a Scabious flower
Picture by John Roy

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